Why R-Rated Comedies Are Dying at the Box Office

This past weekend, *Rough Night,* starring Scarlett Johansson, became the latest R-rated comedy to bomb at the box office, earning only about $8 million in more than 3150 theaters. A female-skewed comedy about a bachelorette party that accidentally kills a male stripper may have sounded funny to a select few filmmakers or actors but clearly doesn't resonate with the majority of Americans. In fact, every single R-rated comedy released this year so far has lost money at the box office, and some of those comedies featured heavyweight actors.

The year started off with the crude and pointless movie *Fist Fight*, starring Ice Cube, which grossed $32 million domestically, and then weeks later, the movie remake of *Chips* fared even worse, only grossing $18 million. For comedies that were made on a budget of around $25 million, the studios needed these movies to make at least $70 million each to make a profit due to marketing and advertising costs.

Then in May, Amy Schumer released her newest comedy *Snatched*, which also failed to please both the critics and the audience, and was pretty much DOA, dead on Arrival. The biggest loss, however, was the raunchy *Baywatch* reboot, starring Dwayne Johnson and Zac Efron, which Paramount was hoping would open up a new franchise. The only problem is that the ginormous movie with the expensive cast didn't make anything near what it needed to make a profit, ultimately crushing the hopes for a sequel. Even international box office wasn't able to save *Baywatch* from sinking.

Making an R-rated version of the popular TV program never made much sense.

With *Rough Night's* tepid opening, this makes five R-rated comedies in a row that have failed to be financially successful. If five faith-based movies bombed in a row, you know you'd start seeing headlines questioning if the genre is even relevant anymore. Thankfully, faith-based movies have proven to be very profitable if done right.

That said, you won't see anyone in Hollywood questioning the R-rated comedy yet, especially with another four similar movies scheduled to release this year. If those four also become money-losers, though, Hollywood financiers won't be the ones laughing, and we'll be there to remind them of an audience of millions of families who want wholesome, funny content. {eoa}

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